



FEMA

Be Prepared: A Solution for Living near the River

Amite, LA – When Jack and Fancy Hanks decided to build a house just 200 feet from the Tangipahoa River, they saw an opportunity to create a home that could stand up to nearly anything Mother Nature could throw at it.

When Hurricane Isaac made landfall in August 2012 and severely damaged thousands of homes in Louisiana, the couple's planning paid off. The slow-moving storm swamped other buildings in their area, but the Hanks' home stayed snug and dry, just as they had planned.

After Jack retired, he and Fancy began making plans to move to Amite, Louisiana. They purchased six acres of land and began planning a 1,500-square-foot home on the banks of the Tangipahoa River. Jack spent hours and hours online looking for ways to protect their home.

"It doesn't cost that much more during the construction phase to do it right," he said. "I wanted to make sure I didn't have trouble when a storm comes — because it's going to come."

In 2007, the couple carefully began construction to protect against flooding and 140 mph winds. They started by elevating the site by about five feet, bringing in dirt for the landfill elevation. They elevated the home another five feet using marine treated pilings.

He also paid particular attention to the roof, using heavy-duty materials. He went beyond building code requirements by using extra hurricane clips on the rafters. He reinforced the concrete under the structure with rebar, then tied everything together for support.

Workers completed the house in 2008 and the Hanks began enjoying a breathtaking view of the Tangipahoa and living the life they had long dreamed of.

The house's first test came just months after they moved in, when Hurricane Gustav made landfall in September 2008. Their home had no flooding at all. Four years later, the river rose above flood stage during Hurricane Isaac.

After the water receded, the couple came home to find that 22 inches of water had buried the concrete slab under the house, with the detached storage shed/garage receiving three feet of water. As for the house itself, the living area received no water at all.

In contrast, all their neighbors along the river who had not elevated their homes received at least three feet of water in the structures.



Tangipahoa Parish,
Louisiana



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Elevation, Structural

Primary Funding:

Private funds